

FAQ: I'm a first aider. Should I change the way I respond to an emergency call?

Information reviewed and current as at 4/2/2022. Next review to be carried out on or before 14/3/2022

NB This review includes a change to the procedure for requesting an ambulance, reverting to the previous method of calling Community Safety FIRST. Apologies for any confusion caused by earlier changes.

The likelihood of you being called to a first aid incident in the University which involves a person who is infected with novel coronavirus (COVID-19) remains low. Even though circulation rates in the population are still high, the data show that there are very low numbers of infected people in our workforce. This is due to the University establishing a COVID-secure workplace, the high rate of vaccination in the UK population, the wide availability of "Lateral Flow Device" tests and for anyone with symptoms to self-isolate at home.

However, there is still a chance that either you or the casualty has contracted the COVID-19 virus, but is not yet showing any symptoms of the disease, so this guidance has been updated regularly in line with that from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), Public Health England (PHE), the Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK) and the University's First Aid training provider.

NOTE: You should not treat COVID-19 complications as a first aid incident, and the patient should be referred to Community Safety and the NHS for treatment, in line with the University's guidance.

For added protection and to reassure casualties, your Safety Pouch now includes:-

- *Fluid-resistant surgical masks (FRSM) for you and the casualty to use during a first aid incident*
- *Safety glasses (of the type which fit over the majority of prescription spectacles)*
- *Disposable nitrile gloves*
- *Disposable polythene apron*
- *A bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitiser*
- *Disinfectant surface wipes*

As a first aider, you should minimise the risk of asymptomatic transmission to casualties by taking frequent lateral flow tests, even if you have completed a course of vaccination.

Approaching the casualty

While Government advice no longer places an emphasis on social distancing, the risk of transmission is still reduced by keeping your distance from the casualty. At a distance, and while wearing a surgical facemask, assess whether the casualty is conscious. IF NOT, immediately don your other PPE (safety glasses, apron and gloves) and follow your training for provision of resuscitation techniques, taking into account the following modifications:-

Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

The following guidance is based on that issued by RCUK and HSE, including campus-specific details:-

- **Remember that if someone has had a cardiac arrest, they will almost certainly die if they are not treated. The use of a facemask and other protective equipment will reduce the risk of virus transmission so that you can be confident when treating them.**
- Recognise cardiac arrest by looking for the absence of signs of life and the absence of normal breathing. **Do not listen or feel for breathing by placing your ear and cheek close to the patient's mouth.** If you are in any doubt about confirming cardiac arrest, the default position is to start chest compressions until help arrives.
- **Call Community Safety (024 765 22222, or 22222 on an internal phone) to request an ambulance, stating the exact location. They will call the ambulance service and escort it to the appropriate rendezvous point.**
- **If you require support and advice from ambulance control, ask Community Safety to patch your call through, and put your phone on speaker so that you can treat the patient and still communicate with ambulance control. If COVID-19 is suspected, tell them when you call.**
- If the patient is not wearing a face-covering or mask, apply a mask from your Safety Pouch to the patient's nose and mouth, ensuring that it doesn't restrict the airway. If you don't have a mask for them, a piece of clothing or a towel over the nose and mouth is a good substitute.

- **Early use of a defibrillator significantly increases the person’s chances of survival and does NOT generate aerosols which would indicate the need for you to wear higher levels of PPE.**
- You should attempt **compression-only CPR and early defibrillation** until the ambulance (or advanced care team) arrives. Put hands together in the middle of the chest and push hard and fast – use the rhythm of the Bee Gees song “Staying Alive”.
- **Do not administer rescue breaths.**
- If you have access to a bag valve mask (“Ambu Bag”), e.g. in an advanced first aid kit, you should use that to provide rescue breaths.
- After performing compression-only CPR, you (and anyone who has helped you) should remove all of your PPE, dispose of it carefully and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. The alcohol-based hand sanitiser in your kit is a convenient alternative if no hand-washing facilities are available nearby, but you should wash your hands as soon as possible.

All other first aid incidents

- Based on your training, if you suspect a serious illness or injury, call for an ambulance immediately: Call Community Safety (024 765 22222, or 22222 on an internal phone) to request an ambulance, stating the exact location. They will call the ambulance service and escort them to the appropriate rendezvous point. If COVID-19 is suspected, tell them when you call.
- If you require support and advice from ambulance control, ask Community Safety to patch your call through, and put your phone on speaker so that you can treat the patient and still communicate with the ambulance call handler.

When first attending, stay a minimum of 2 metres away from the patient while establishing the circumstances of the injury. Ask the patient to wear a face-covering or mask if they are not already wearing one (you can provide them with one from your Safety Pouch if they do not have one).

You must wear a surgical facemask from your Safety Pouch

Ask the patient to confirm if they have any of the early symptoms of COVID-19 infection:-

- High temperature
- New, persistent cough
- A loss of the sense of smell or taste

If they have, you should exercise extreme caution, and advise the patient (unless they have been fully vaccinated) that they should immediately self-isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days and arrange to have a COVID-19 PCR test (either using the University’s Test & Trace service at Gibbet Hill or via the NHS). They should also report their infection to their line manager, and seek further advice and guidance on what to do from the University coronavirus webpages (see link below).

Try to assist at a safe distance from the casualty as much as you can and minimise the time you share a breathing zone.

If they are capable, tell them to do things for you, but treating the casualty properly should be your first concern.

If you need to administer treatment yourself, sanitise your hands, then don your remaining PPE (polythene apron, safety glasses and disposable gloves).

Treat the case in the normal way.

When you have ended all contact with the casualty, remove your PPE in the following order:-

- Gloves
- Apron (ensure you only touch the inside surfaces of the polythene)
- SANITISE YOUR HANDS
- Eye Protection

- Surgical Mask

Bag any waste materials, including your gloves, apron, mask, paper tissues, etc., and place the sealed bag in the appropriate waste stream for collection, in line with how you have been trained.

Put on a fresh mask, or the one you normally wear which is appropriate to the setting. Wash your hands thoroughly (for a minimum of 20 seconds) with soap and hot water. The alcohol-based hand gel in your kit is a convenient alternative if washing facilities are not immediately available. Advise the casualty to also wash their hands straightaway.

Wash your safety glasses under hot water and dry with a paper towel, or use a disinfectant wipe from your kit.

If you need to call for an ambulance, call Community Safety (024 765 22222, or 22222 on an internal phone) and confirm the exact location. They will call the ambulance service and escort them to the right place to avoid delays.

Thank you for your continued service to the University community.

Useful links to additional information

[Guidance on first aid from the Health & Safety Executive](#)

[Performing CPR during COVID-19, from the Resuscitation Council UK](#)

[University Coronavirus webpages](#)